9: Stadling--89-90 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut
116, 178, 231, 422, 556

"The Yakuts are generally poor. Their principal possessions consist of cattle and horses. The Yakut horses are small and shaggy, but very hardy, strong, and good-tempered animals. Throughout the long and terrible winter they subsist on the grass underneath the snow, which, like the reindeer, they remove with their feet, the strongest [90] horses going in front, and the weaker ones following them, eating the uncovered grass. The Yakuts, like other Tatar peoples, are very fond of horse-meat, and from the horses' milk they prepare the well-known kumiss. The number of horses they own, however, is diminishing, and only well-to-do Yakuts as a rule now keep them, the great majority having cattle instead. (1)

1. In former times the Yakuts regarded cattle as unclean animals, but little by little utility has conquered superstition, so that the cow has now to a great extent replaced the horse both as a yielder of milk and meat, and also as a beast of burden."

233 starvation. In June the reindeer has already become noticeably
492 fatter. In autumn and winter the natives harness mostly female reindeer; in the spring they ride exclusively on bucks, protecting the cows which are with calf. The natives said that not so long ago they made a practice of not harnessing the mares to the sleds beginning about ten days after the mare had copulated with a buck, in order to avoid miscarriages.

If a reindeer collapses from hunger while being ridden, in order to force him to go on the natives knead him in the stomach with their fists, and if this is of no avail, they cut off one of his ears.

3.

233 The reindeer, which is an object of private property, is marked
422 by each owner with a particular sign called the belie. The most reliable markings are considered to be figures made by making cuts in the ears of the animal, without making any distinction between the right and left ear; these ear cuts have different appellations depending on their form [Fig. 17]. Independently of the markings on the ears, the natives cut signs with a knife in the form of different combinations of lines in the hair on the sides of the reindeer [Fig. 18]. They do this in the month of the spring sunrise, after the polar night--the time of severe cold--has passed, in order that the reindeer may not get frostbitten in the places where the hair has been cut off. The signs of ownership are the same both for bucks and for mares. Cult signs, as among the Tavgi, are not found among the
233 Dolgan. When the children of a family grow up and are given part
428 of the reindeer herd for their own, the old markings are left on the grown reindeer, and the new markings are put only on the offspring. The youngest son, who is the last in line to receive the family
[583] wealth, receives his father's markings by inheritance. The markings
233 of the husband are put on reindeer which are received as part of a
422 dowry. When an owner buys another reindeer he cuts his own markings into its ears, and one may often see reindeer with several markings in their ears. It must be added that when an owner has a large herd not all the reindeer are marked with the signs of ownership. The Dolgan have an amazing ability [Facing 198: Figure 16 on an unpaginated insert] [199] to recognize their own reindeer even after several years have passed, and even when the reindeer were only calves when last seen. Rich reindeer breeders often have more reindeer in their herds than they can count, but if they see one of their own reindeer in someone else's herd they recognize it at once, even if it has no markings; at the same time they are unable to say which

233 reindeer are missing in their own herds. We tried to find out how
422 this was done, but even the Dolgan themselves could not explain it,
but only said that it was so simple because the eye "gets used to"
233 one's own reindeer. [Fig. 17] If a strange reindeer attaches himself
425 to a herd the owner of the herd passes the word along and supports
the reindeer until its owner is found.

233 It must be concluded that the custom of regarding reindeer as
261 private property did not arise so long ago--perhaps even after the
422 Russians came--which can be seen from the following: 1) in summer
the reindeer owned by a rich man are treated as a food supply for
the whole nomadic group in case of insufficiency of wild animals
and birds; in such cases the reindeer are killed without any com-
pensation for the owner; 2) the fact that it is only within the last
few decades that the reindeer has become an object of merchandise.
These questions are considered in greater detail in our work on the
Dolgan clan, and for this reason we shall not dwell on them here.

233 Up to the present time there has existed the custom of rich men
427 lending reindeer "gratis" to poor men, which cannot help leading
to cases of open or hidden exploitation. Usually in the autumn the
nearby poor men descend on a rich person and take reindeer from
him for their needs for a month, for two months, or until spring,
depending on the understanding; and if the borrowed reindeer is
killed by a wolf or dies of a disease, the poor man does not have
to make good the loss, but merely brings the hide from the rein-
deer's leg to the owner. An especially favorable environment for
exploitation is formed when reindeer are lent to a poor man to im-
port government loads: in this case the rich man gives the poor man
several extra reindeer in order that the poor man may import the
alloted load on them, and for this labor the latter is not repaid in
any way, but the money for transporting the goods goes to the owner
of the reindeer. The advantage of such an arrangement becomes
clear when one realizes that under this system the rich man does
not have to hire draymen at his own expense.

233 Besides the "gratis" dispensation of reindeer, there also exists ex-
432 change of reindeer, and--a later phenomenon--selling of reindeer.

437 In exchanging reindeer, A asks B for one of the latter's fine rein-
deer which A likes, offering in return a reindeer which is not equal
in value to B's reindeer, or even a reindeer which is no good at all;
as he does this, A says that later on B will obtain a good reindeer
from him on the same terms. The selling of reindeer is not a fre-
quent occurrence even nowadays among the Dolgan; they buy (that
is, in 1929-1931) a buck for twenty-five or thirty rubles cash, or for